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**Evoking 'New Zealandness': representations of nationalism during the (New Zealand) 2011 Rugby World Cup**

*Damion Sturm and Geoff Lealand*

From the moment at the International Rugby Board (IRB) meeting in Dublin in November 2005, when it was announced that New Zealand would be the host nation for the 2011 Rugby World Cup, it was clear this event was not just about a series of games, semi-finals and a winner. It was to be a grand event for New Zealand, which was as much about financial returns, visitor numbers and showcasing New Zealand to the rest of the world—and hopefully getting exposure beyond the usual rugby-watching nations, which can be described as 'international' but not necessarily 'global'. Our article explores the representations of 'New Zealandness' that were evoked by holding this host nation status. However, rather the rugby itself, it is the mediated moments, nationalistic communal rituals, ancillary events and the (trans)national promotional cultures of corporate sponsors that coalesced around New Zealand and forms of nation-building that are our prime focus.

**Staging the Event: The 2011 Rugby World Cup as Nation-Building**

The 2011 Rugby World Cup (RWC) was the biggest sporting event in New Zealand's recent history, being grander and arguably more 'global' than the 1987 inaugural Rugby World Cup, the 1990 Commonwealth Games, the 1992 Cricket World Cup, and the 2003 America's Cup. Pre-tournament, nationalistic rhetoric abound, espousing notions of a unified New Zealand that would provide a 'stadium of 4 million' (Snedden) given New Zealand's pervasive rugby culture and alleged 'passion' for the game (developed later), while providing an opportunity for New Zealand to showcase both rugby and itself to the world. To support these assumptions, the scale and significance of the event had to substantiate such rhetoric. As such, laced with the hue and stature of similar sporting events, the RWC endeavoured to meet the requirements of a 'global media event' which, as Rowe suggests, has the following conditions;

To be an 'event' it must be specifically situated in time and space, with a limited number of visible participants; but to be 'global' it must overcome temporal and spatial constraints, and must make those who are not physically present feel as if they were; and therefore is subject to a particular regime of (audiovisual) media representation that simulates the experience of physical attendance whilst technologically enhancing it. ("Global Media" 11)

Writing about global sporting events, in the context of the Atlanta Olympic Games of 1996 and Sydney Olympic Games of 2000, Rivenburgh points to other purposes of such events:

Whether one calls them international events, mega-events, or global media events, hosting an Olympic Games is one of several strategies used by city and national governments for image enhancement on a global stage ... There are many reasons why cities and nations compete vigorously to host the Olympic Games. At the top of the list is to gain prestige and favourable world opinion. (5)

It is highly unlikely that New Zealand will ever host the Olympic Games. The billions of dollars required for infrastructure, the lack of a population mass and the tyranny of distance precludes such a possibility. The RWC is as close as we have come to an Olympic 'mega-event', and quite possibly as close as we will ever come. Certainly, part of the New Zealand government and the New Zealand Rugby Union's (NZRU) joint agenda was to harness 'prestige', and the anxieties about on-time preparation, entertainment options, crowd control and ticket sales which accompanied the build-up was an echo of the same pre-event uncertainties other, bigger events have gone through.

Rivenburgh also suggests that "the ability to stage a logistically complex international event is seen as a symbol of modernity" (5), as was the case for Mexico City in 1968, Seoul in 1988 and Beijing in 2008, in respect of the Olympics. For New Zealand, which has long been regarded as an advanced Western economy, the staging of the RWC had more to do with the country and its citizens.

This was about projecting forms of Bourdieu's symbolic and cultural capital (*Distinction*, "The Forms"); the display of an advanced modernist nation capable of hosting major events, the reification of an imagined collective identity forged around the 'national game' and an ability to infuse an international tournament with the vitality, prestige and aura of a major global (media) spectacle (Kellner, Rowe "Global Media", *Sport, Culture*, Whannel). Or, to use a rather hackneyed expression, to demonstrate that New Zealand could once again 'punch above their weight' in the international arena while further endorsing the alleged 'can-do' country attitude. Such expressions were perpetuations of nation-building stereotypes derived from war (New Zealand's 'fighting spirit') and encapsulated within the supposed 'kiwi ingenuity' or resourcefulness of the mythical 'kiwi bloke' (Phillips, Keith Sinclair) which will be returned to later. More recently, the activities of film-maker Peter Jackson and Weta Workshops had, to some degree, further reified such nationalistic myths on a global scale, while highlighting New Zealand as a low-cost and compliant centre for global film production. Therefore through obtaining and hosting the RWC, and coupled with the declaration by the global broadcaster CNN that New Zealand was "number two of the top nine destinations for 2011" for international travellers ("New Zealand"), the stage was set for building a market for the event, particularly through the strategic projection and mobilisation of 'the nation'.

With assumptions and assertions of globalisation shaping contemporary cultures, the role of nation-states, and particularly notions of national identity under the sway of globalisation, become problematic. Globalisation itself reflects the altering relationship between the local and global, an interrelationship that exposes contradictions between a perhaps *mythical* shared sense of national identity, on the one hand, and a more fluid notion of global citizenship and connectedness, on the other (Bauman, Maguire, Urry). Nevertheless, as Robins reminds us, "in different locations, different contexts, different circumstances, the nature and configuration of the globalization process will vary" (23). Within the specificity of

New Zealand as the global-local nexus, rugby and hosting a global event underpinned the repetitive evocations of the nation, national identity and a sense of 'New Zealandness'.

### **Nationalism**

Not merely a fixed and static entity tied to political, geographical and economic structures, understanding the nation as constituted in and through "a cultural formation, a feeling of belonging, and a shared heritage" (Hardt and Negri 336) offers insights into the social and cultural expressions that seemingly emanate from within the locale. Viewing the nation-state and associated forms of identification through symbolic, affective and evocative lenses reveals the layers of (re)construction, (re)invention and (re)appropriation that forge, (re)affirm and cement nationalistic allegiances and forms of collectivity. Silk, Andrews and Cole argue that the nation is steeped in "an historical veneer of tradition and mythology" (17). These myths, themselves (re)invented, (re)shaped and (re)asserted, convey a historical representation of the nation (Barthes) and, as part of the nation-building process, attempt to reflect and reproduce the 'idealised' characteristics, symbols, traditions and cohesion on which to articulate a 'shared' sense of nationhood. As Whannel suggests, "the word 'mythology' is apt in denoting a process of constructing national narratives, - stories that organise, explain and clarify the ways in which people can live their relation to a broader collectivity" (171). More broadly, myths coalesce with national traditions and their associated rituals to (re)confirm and (re)produce salient elements of a nation's past in a seemingly timeless and cyclical fashion (notwithstanding contestations, discrepancies and resistance to these national narratives).

The power of contemporary media and technologies further shape, filter and disseminate these interrelated nationalistic discourses. As such, collectivity is itself collectively garnered and made to reflect what Anderson refers to as 'imagined communities', whereby these myths, images, discourses and narratives reconfirm a 'shared' sense of national identity and unity. However, Billig also counters that banal nationalism is an inconspicuous occurrence underpinning contemporary culture, with nationalism needing to be flagged, most prominently during communal rituals, to hail and evoke nationalistic sentiments once more.

So with reference to New Zealand as a nation, connections are made to a particular geographical location in the south Pacific (Keith Sinclair), a vista of 'natural' landscapes (Bell) and an array of symbolic imagery to literally reflect this situatedness and to 'flag' a sense of nationhood (Fox, Mulholland). What becomes pronounced are the individuated evocations of the nation that create an overarching, collective sense of New Zealand as allegedly unique or 'exceptional'; the 'native' kiwi, flora, and fauna, the discursive construction of an assumed clean, green, ecological 'utopia' and the mystique that accompanies the occasional embracing of Maori culture (Bell, Keith Sinclair, Perry "Close Encounters"). While these are salient signifiers of the nation, New Zealand's nation-building has predominantly and explicitly been a masculine domain. Hence, an historical pioneer/colonial national identity was deemed to have 'tamed' the settler lands (Keith Sinclair), been forged on the battlefields (the Anzacs at Gallipoli), and to have been continually tested through rugby successes (Phillips, Palenski). Until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the 'kiwi bloke' was emblematic of a form of nationhood; purportedly rural, resourceful and modest (if not uncouth), who stereotypically gravitated towards an interest in 'rugby, racing and beer consumption' (Phillips). Law, Campbell and Schick caution that "there is no equivalent feminine myth" (14),

with women excluded from such nation-building processes, while only Maori 'comrades' in war or rugby were aligned with the 'kiwi bloke' (Phillips).

Over the last 30 years, the 'kiwi bloke' myth has eroded and unravelled via post-colonial contestations to gendered and racial divisions (Law, Campbell and Dolan). However, these broader 'patriotic' representations continue to play out in contemporary mediations. For example, nationalistic myths and symbolic associations through idyllic landscapes, rural locations, Maori culture and constructions of 'a' New Zealand masculinity remain prevalent; across advertising (Speight's beer or 'Kiwi' Bank), via television (the rural in *Heartland* and *Country Calendar*) and in filmic depictions (the landscapes of the *Lord of the Rings*, or the differing representations of Maori, culture and the land in *Once were Warriors*, *Whale Rider* and *Boy*), (see Bell, Campbell, Law and Honeyfield, Conrich, Conrich and Woods, Fox, Hill, Jackson, Gee, and Scherer, Perry *Dominion*, Smith and Mercier). Nevertheless, these aspects often become clichéd and banal to an extent, requiring specific 'nationalistic' events, such as New Zealand hosting the 2011 RWC, to flag the nation and corral forms of nationalistic allegiance, identification and support.

### **Nationalism and Sport**

Many authors have pointed to the salience of sporting contestations between nations for, for example, forging nationalistic identities and reifying assumptions of the nation (Rowe "Sport and the Repudiation", Silk, Andrews and Cole, Whannel); constructing emotive nationalistic feelings through invented sporting traditions (Hobsbawm); and sport's collective agential power for the "massing of peoples through sporting interest to identify and unite them" (Turner 91). Moreover, linking nationalism to a literal sporting analogy, Hobsbawm infers that, "the imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people. The individual, even the one who only cheers, becomes a symbol of his nation himself" (143). Adjusting this team to fifteen named players, we can extrapolate that the role of rugby within New Zealand's national and cultural identity is well established, if not increasingly being challenged.

#### *New Zealand: A Rugby Nation (?)*

Offering an overview of these nationalistic renditions, Scherer and Jackson note that,

Rugby's place within New Zealand popular culture has been described and characterized using all the usual clichés: a national obsession, a fundamental part of the nation's character and values, the raw material of the social fabric of society, and a national religion. (*Globalization* 5)

Already perceived as a 'sporting nation', much of rugby's nationalistic discursive ties have emerged through interpretations of rugby as a mechanism for social integration and inclusiveness via an egalitarian structure (Fougere), as well as assumptions of historically unifying and civilising New Zealand masculinities (Phillips). Tours by New Zealand rugby teams in 1889 and, especially the celebrated 1905 and 1924 successes in Great Britain, have also played a significant role in nation-building. These tours served to galvanise the 'emerging' nation around such accomplishments and the championing of an alleged definable colonial spirit, while subsequent tours have perpetuated past and present mythologies pertaining to New Zealand's character and masculinity (Daley, Ryan *Forerunners, Tackling*).

Nevertheless, rugby's centrality and nation-defining position has gradually eroded within the national psyche since the 1980s. The social and political unrest of the 1981 Springboks Tour was especially divisive, with many questioning rugby's hegemonic role in relation to an abhorrent Apartheid political context. The wounds of 1981 may have healed, but rugby's national and cultural saturation have continued to be challenged. Criticisms have been levelled at the gendered and 'hard' hegemonic forms of masculinity rugby promulgates (Pringle "Competing", *Doing*; Pringle and Markula), reinforced by falling participation rates in junior and senior grassroots rugby which, in turn, fail to reflect its 'national' status. A prolonged rugby season (February-November) has witnessed a decline in televisual and spectator figures, while All Blacks tests no longer necessarily sell out grounds (Scherer and Jackson *Globalization*). Additionally, broader disinterest and/or despair at excessive mediated rugby coverage, coupled with the hyperbolic expectations and then resultant 'nationalistic mourning' that accompanies continual failures at the RWC may have also impacted on national allegiances.

Perhaps most telling has been the overt commercialisation of rugby, the All Blacks and nationalism over the past 25 years. With reference to the commencement of Lion Nathan's Steinlager beer sponsorship in 1986, Perry asserts that, "if All Black rugby was to be made over (once again) to represent the nation, it would have to be made over. Only now, 'representing a nation' was to be subordinated to 'building a market'" ("Boots, Boats" 295). Marking the shift to professionalism, such trends escalated via the intrusive forms of global marketing and commodification that took place when the transnational conglomerate Adidas became the main All Blacks sponsor in 1997. As such, it can be argued that a national audience was becoming increasingly wary of these (transnational) corporations and (global) forces circulating around the national team. Indeed, Scherer and Jackson infer that during the 2000s, a rugby public increasingly sensed that the All Blacks were being transformed into a series of branded commodities (the 'All Blacks' literally as a brand), were being entangled in the banal rhetoric of global capital ('market synergies') and that there was an increasing disconnect emerging between the players, national team and 'ordinary' New Zealanders (*Globalization*). These forms of 'corporate nationalism', wherein transnational corporations utilise promotional cultures and forms of global capital to (re)shape and (re)construct nationalistic allegiances and identities (Silk, Andrews and Cole), will be returned to in due course through specific examinations of Steinlager and Adidas.

Nevertheless, by exploring the interrelationship between sport and nationalism it is clear that, in the New Zealand context, rugby's traditional and mythical status as the 'national' game has been a complex, contradictory and increasingly vexed process to sustain or retain. What becomes remarkable with the 2011 RWC was how the tournament vividly (re)captured the illusory galvanising nationalistic properties of rugby; hailing and evoking these aspects through associated political, commercial and mediated discourses. Despite the eroding of rugby's centralising claims to nation-building, the host nation status and national team seemingly rekindled and revitalised forms of national allegiance, collectivity and unification. The socio-cultural exchanges, displays and ancillary events reified these sentiments around and through rugby during the 2011 RWC.



### **Media Coverage (and Saturation)**

Written prior to the event, Fahy intimated the levels of mediated (and cultural) penetration that the RWC would precipitate, noting,

Put yourself in the shoes of a rugby hater for a moment. Almost everywhere you turn you are bombarded with earnest, emotional ads from sponsors of the All Blacks or the Rugby World Cup talking about the long-awaited victory, national pride, unwavering support and inner belief, while the 'cluster ruck' of domestic broadcasters (Sky, Rugby Channel, TV3, TV One and Maori TV) screening, repeating and analysing the Big Rugby Event means it will probably be quite difficult to escape the tournament when it kicks off.

Fahy's predictions would prove to be prophetic for it is not an understatement to suggest that, for the six week duration of the RWC tournament, rugby was at the forefront of national media coverage, political rhetoric and, allegedly, the everyday social realities of most New Zealanders. In terms of media coverage all 48 games were broadcast live on Sky (pay) Television, while three other free-to-air stations also screened the matches (Maori Television also had all 48, including 16 live; TV3 and TV One had seven live each and highlights packages). Even outside of the matches, the RWC was a heavily mediated event with rugby dominating national and local news coverage across various platforms (television, radio, print and online), while often being fore-grounded as the day's headline story (especially All Blacks news or local press coverage for provincial pool games). Moreover, the celebratory post-RWC All Blacks Parade in Auckland was screened live on both TV One and TV3, a rare disruption to the 'normal' afternoon schedule usually reserved for more 'calamitous' occasions, such as the 9/11 Twin Tower attacks of 2001 or the recent Christchurch earthquakes in February 2011. It is not an understatement to assert that, publicly and privately, rugby permeated daily conversations and dominated all kinds of discourse with, for example, a litany of rugby related (and nationalistically inflicted) anecdotes, experiences, images, aspirations and proclamations manifest in mainstream media coverage, blogs and social network sites.

These levels of media saturation and claims on nation-building draw comparisons to Bell's discussion of the America's Cup yachting coverage and parades in New Zealand in 1995. For Bell, "the strongest place in public representations of New Zealand way of life is claimed by the events, celebrations, lifestyle and material consumption of the more advantaged group" (12) while having a significant influence on, and access to, constructing national imagery. From this viewpoint, the RWC can be seen as operating on behalf of and shaped by the interests of a powerful few: the New Zealand Government who had poured millions into the RWC to mobilise a 'market' for nationalism and to 'brand' New Zealand via the global event; the IRB who endorsed its (inter)national appeal for global audiences to increase their revenue streams; the sponsorship of transnational corporations who often espoused 'nationalistic' sentiments as a form of self-promotion (see later discussion of promotional cultures); and the NZRU carefully managing the national team with a view to expanding the reach of the All Blacks 'brand'. Of course, such an event was further enacting power relations by reclaiming and reasserting the hegemonic dominance of rugby on the national psyche, as well as reconstructing and reaffirming a version of the nation to itself, even if only for the duration of the tournament.

Through this mediated coverage, New Zealanders were hailed as nationalistic subject-citizens and interpellated into a range of public and private practices (Althusser) during the tournament being, for example, expected to watch New Zealand play, 'care' about the result and read/view the contest through a nationalistic lens while concurrently expressing a binary sense of communal solidarity as well as difference from the opposition. In this regard, 'New Zealanders' were being corralled to actively care for their nation and national team, as well as to socially engage in communal rituals that demonstrated this affective national-subject relationship through collective gatherings, spectatorship and involvement in RWC themed events (official, vernacular or via the imagined communities of national and/or global mediations). A *Dominion Post* editorial reveals the degrees of nationalistic hailing and subjective interpellation that were already at play for the RWC one week prior to its opening. Entitled 'we all have a role in World Cup success', the newspaper reminds the inferred 'we' (the assumed New Zealand reader) that "there is no overstating the importance to New Zealand of hosting this event. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to showcase ourselves to the world like never before" ("Editorial: We All"). The editorial then goes on to evoke a sense of what it means to be a 'kiwi' (see Cummings also), while corraling its assumed nationalistic subject-citizens to adopt an expected standard of behaviour for RWC success.

It is important, then, that all New Zealanders ensure those who come here, and those that watch from around the world, get a truly Kiwi experience. Whether the All Blacks are successful depends on the performance of the 30 players who now carry a nation's hopes on their shoulders. Whether the World Cup is successful depends on how the stadium of 4 million acts as hosts. ("Editorial: We All")

### **Communal Rituals: 'Black Outs', Collectivity and Contestation**

As hosts the nation did perform for, in a commercial and very public sense, the country was awash with 'black out' campaigns. Aside from media directives (illustrated above), numerous (trans)national corporations and companies also implored the display, use or significance of black inspired themes to support the national team. Many 'local' companies, such as PaknSave, Bluebird, Meridian Energy or All Black (trans)national sponsors' Air New Zealand, Rexona, Powerade and Weetbix produced 'black' products or marketing campaigns. Enamoured by the All Blacks official catch-cry for fans to 'stand in black' during the RWC, black motifs were prevalent in everyday encounters and omnipresent in locations around New Zealand through a range of elaborate to 'excessive' displays. In fact, rather than the conventional combination of the Southern Cross and Union Jack, 'All Blacks' flags often in combination with an emblematic Silver fern were everywhere; in street and shop displays, fluttering in the porches and windows of homes, attached to car windows, and draped over farm buildings. Although tinged with nostalgically exaggerated overtures, Roughan's observations capture the pervasiveness of these nationalistic displays:

In towns, the banners (of) all participating countries adorned shops, streets and offices, and every second car was flying a little blag flag and silver fern. Out in the country, farmers made shrines in their front paddock, flying the black flag and fern and putting up signs with the nation's united exhortation: "Go All Blacks". Foreign rugby fans travelling the country in campervans met a nation that knew their game, a stadium of four million.



This mobilising of a collective sense of New Zealandness via the 'stadium of four million' slogan would persist in other forms, with the brandishing and abundance of black merchandise, paraphernalia and adornments pervasive as a populist display. For example, the presence of 'party zones' as designated public spaces for screenings of rugby (such as bars, city centres, parks, event venues and cinemas) was pronounced across the regions. Carroll indicates that various party zones, many of which were also established as non-alcoholic family zones, were far and wide in their provincial scope and drew in large community numbers. Additionally, the post-RWC celebratory parades were notable for their large attendance numbers and for the visual 'sea of black' that surrounded these All Black celebrations, with crowd estimations of 200,000 in Auckland, 50,000 in Christchurch and 100,000 in Wellington (Duff, "100,000 Fans").

While the RWC may have reflected what Bell suggests is an overt celebration of 'kiwi men and kiwi manhood', she notes that such events also "fosters social rituals; friends get together to watch races and matches, and talk about it with others later. It provides experiences in common for a large group of people, reinforcing shared values. It works as an arena of representation of nation and nationhood" (Bell 16). Although clearly hailed and interpellated as subjects, and commercialised as a process, the individuated displays to collective outpourings created their own communal and nationalistic spectacle throughout the tournament. In their own way, such individuated and collective spectacles added to the rhetorical, imagined and symbolic forms of nation-building being mobilised at the time.

These expressions of nationalism, as well as forms of nationalistic subjectification also flag an array of conflicts and paradoxes, as well as inclusionary and exclusionary practices. Whannel notes,

The representations of sport reproduce national stereotypes of others, whilst celebratory, patriotic and often xenophobic ideas of who 'we' are. This is complex, because some are or feel or choose to be excluded; some are internationalist by inclination or multinational by background; localist and regionalist sympathies divide nations; and national identities are always constructed from a complex combination of elements. (170)

Not surprisingly, therefore, oppositional viewpoints also surfaced, with some individuals rejecting their interpellated national subject positions to express their dissent, disinterest or disdain for rugby (such as the 'Sick of RWC' Facebook page with 468 members; albeit dwarfed by the official RWC page's 1.7 million members), and the associated commercialisation, costs and disruptions associated with the tournament (McAllister).

Two other oppositional expressions were more noticeable in the public sphere. The first was essentially a piece of marketing artifice, with MediaWorks' FOUR television channel identifying itself as 'The Home of Not Rugby' prior to and during the tournament. An attempt to offer a point of difference that "references the overkill" (Fahy), this was marketing chicanery rather than an anti-rugby stance, especially given MediaWorks' heavy promotion and coverage of rugby via TV3 and across its radio stations and online sites. The second example served to highlight the hegemonic relationships enshrined within both the appropriation of and the appropriate forms for legitimising, financing, promulgating and politicising nationalistic sporting allegiances. The 'New Zealand' Warriors, represented via

the media as a pseudo-national team (despite an All Blacks equivalent in the 'Kiwis'), generated widespread 'local' interest during the RWC for making the Australian National Rugby League Grand Final. Nevertheless, neither the NZRU nor Government were willing to accommodate fan requests for similar RWC or All Blacks inspired events and paraphernalia for the Warriors. Not wishing to dilute from their strategic 'brand' for nation-building, the encroachment of the rival code and pseudo-national league team was marginalised to categorically reassert rugby's established hegemonic position for evoking New Zealandness during the prestigious and expensive 'home' RWC. In general, it is also fair to assert that other oppositional and dissenting occurrences were in the minority or marginalised.

Additionally, while forms of New Zealand parochialism would surface through localities brandishing 'their' regional RWC experience when hosting games and billeting selected international teams (Cummings, "Editorial: A Day", "Editorial: Thumbs"), there was an overarching, if not somewhat nostalgic, embracing of collectivism that allegedly enveloped and aligned New Zealand's regions. For example discussing the Romania versus Georgia pool game played in Palmerston North (a game of seemingly little significance or capable of drawing much interest), Rasmussen observes that, more broadly, "the response from provincial New Zealand has been one of the real surprises of the whole tournament so far". He considered such displays as "a great show of patriotism on the part of New Zealanders, who for a couple of hours adopted the two teams and cheered them on to make them feel welcome and to put on a good show on behalf of the country" (Rasmussen). Similar sentiments were echoed elsewhere, imbuing host centres with intrinsic nationalistic qualities for an imagined symbolic, geographic and cultural collective coalescing around rugby, being a 'kiwi' and the mythic 'stadium of four million' (Cummings, "Editorial: Both All Blacks", "Editorial: The Other", Roughan).

A final intriguing dimension within these communal RWC rituals was that, conversely, disparate national allegiances and identities also emerged. Whannel's earlier quote points to the possibilities of xenophobia and the marginalising of differences within sporting nationalisms, some of which have been traced. However, diverse nationhoods were discernible during the tournament; not only in terms of the touring fans supporting their specific nations, but also within these communal rituals which corralled subjects to show their support. In such instances, varying nationalities and nationalisms were clear through colours, jerseys and especially flags. Indeed, one of the most dominant signs (in several senses) of the RWC was the visibility of flags. Even though New Zealand/All Blacks flags dominated the landscape, there was also a proliferation of flags of the 19 other nations ("Editorial: Fun and Games", "Editorial: The Other"). Such public displays were seemingly 'kicked off' by the exuberance of Tongan supporters, with 7000 fans greeting their team at the Auckland Airport (Jones and Tapaleao) and convoys of cars covered in the Tongan flag visible throughout New Zealand towns and cities in the first week of games. Flag 'adoption' was also closely aligned to the groups of locals who subsequently adopted second teams ("Editorial: A Day"), represented their multicultural origins and/or embraced the performances of the so-called 'minnows', such as Georgia or Namibia (Rasmussen).

#### **Ancillary Events: The RWC Opening Ceremony and the 'REAL' New Zealand Festival**

In turn, some communal rituals and public displays, organised as 'official' mass events, were explicitly orientated towards evoking the nation and forms of nation-building. A prime example was the 2011 RWC Opening Ceremony which, as a spectacle, reproduced three

commonly deployed techniques for such occasions. The first is the (re)inventing of traditions and reifying of nationalistic myths to render the host nation's socio-cultural history in a nostalgic and engrossing form. The second spectacle is the host country endeavouring to out-do the ceremony of four years previous, in terms of intensity and theatrical excess (now greatly assisted by technology). The third, via close analysis of these ceremonies, reveals the repetition of familiar tropes; a young girl or boy at the centre of the drama, representing the 'youth' of the host country, displays of old and new cultural surfaces, explorations of reconstructed landscape and geography, and celebrations of pluralism and social inclusion, as well as erasure of unsavoury elements and lingering inequalities in the nation's history (John Sinclair). Many of these components can be seen in the opening ceremony of the 2011 RWC.

According to Manhire, New Zealand correspondent for *The Guardian* (UK), the event 'ticked all the opening ceremony boxes' which are now seemingly compulsory,

The event, a thematic mix of Maori tradition and rugby heritage, focused around a massive circular screen stuck to the centre of the field. It framed a torrent of images—animated Maori koru symbols became a sea of yachts, of distended hammerhead sharks. Then came an extended tracking shot through the landscape of New Zealand—'the stadium of four million' World Cup organisers boast of—that looked as though it might have been spliced together from Peter Jackson's Tolkien out-takes.

The narrative then moved on to focus on the figure of schoolboy Ethan Bai, in a central role designed to embody the amateur roots of rugby; a sport now dominated by professionalism, exclusive rights and corporatisation. The great majority of New Zealanders—and presumably the international audience too—were allegedly impressed by the technological renderings of these national myths and images. Indeed, there were a purported 1.6 million television viewers for the opening ceremony (or 1 in 3 New Zealanders) but there was some criticism in the wake of the event in respect of its emphasis on Maori legend and iconography and neglect of Pakeha culture ("Huge Audience", "Rugby World Cup").

These other aspects of New Zealand were better expressed in the outcomes from the hosting of visiting teams in 23 provincial towns and cities, so that they may experience the "real New Zealand" or "local-flavoured 'hometown' welcomes" ("New Zealand"). Such encounters were also expected to be a part of the nationwide REAL New Zealand Festival, which ran from 9 September to 23 October 2011, as a self-promoted "nationwide celebration of New Zealand arts, heritage, culture, entertainment, business, food and wine", that was "destined to turn New Zealand into a non-stop party zone" and served to provide "a celebration of all things Kiwis love most about New Zealand" ("A REAL"). Funded events ranged from the Methven Rodeo, to performances of Bruce Mason's *The End of the Golden Weather* by the Auckland Theatre Company, to city installations in Auckland and Wellington and a touring caravan show around the South Island, designed by NZ On Screen to display New Zealand's screen culture. The imperatives of the RWC shaped and shaded many of these events but many of them also escaped the commodification implicit in the selling of tickets, allocation of screening rights and the onslaught of merchandising.

### *Advertising, 'New Zealandness' and Rugby*

Overt (trans)national commercialisation and the ensuing 'onslaught' of corporate promotional cultures produced its own intriguing representational site for blurred evocations of the nation during the 2011 RWC. As a socio-cultural and economic phenomenon, advertising has been understood through its symbolic construction, representation and circulation of myths (Barthes), its capacity for fetishising commodities (Jhally), its signification of pre-coded differentiations (Baudrillard), and for embedding 'loemarks' or affective traces within products, brands and ideas (Fleming and Sturm, Jenkins, Klein). Of course, the role that cultural intermediaries, such as advertising agencies, public relations firms and marketing 'experts' play in furnishing, imparting and 'legitimatising' the symbolic, persuasive, authoritative and emotive properties encoded in advertising cannot be understated (Bourdieu *Distinction*, Nixon, Scherer and Jackson *Globalization*). Combined, these carefully crafted omniscient images of branded identities, lifestyles and cultures percolate through contemporary advertising while also, to some degree, defining contemporary social life and nationalistic representations (Baudrillard, Horne, Jackson and Andrews, Urry, Whannel).

In relation to New Zealand specifically, Turner suggests that sport and advertisements symbolically function to make "New Zealandness itself an object of product placement and site of investment" (91). In examining Adidas' depiction of 'New Zealandness' through images of Maori, the haka, rugby and landscape in their 1999 advertisement, '*Haka*', Turner notes "the more people watch, the more true the image would appear as this advertisement is not just an image of our making but an image that makes us, or makes us over (the nation and its associated identity)" (91). Thus, such advertisements hail the nationalistic subject, interpellating him/her from forms of individuation to collectivity, while affectively imbuing these visual (and imagined) national representations as sites of allegiance and attachment.

This reinforces Urry's notion of branded nationalism, whereby he argues that nations are essentially branded global signifiers disseminated through promotional cultures. However, Turner is also suggesting that collective identification is a process of bonding over branding, with nationalistic advertising articulating a bond between the 'mass' audience versus the brand as a distinctive personality or identity. In New Zealand advertisements, themes of history, tradition, masculinity, landscape and nostalgia are this bond; serving to (re)invent, (re)assert and reify mythical and imagined symbolic evocations of 'New Zealandness' (Perry *Dominion*, Scherer and Jackson *Globalization*, Turner). Renditions of New Zealand rugby and/or sporting cultures reproduce these bonds, as the examples of Steinlager and Adidas demonstrate.

### **All Black Sponsorship: Steinlager and Adidas**

As a 'local' brand, Steinlager has a long history of merging forms of nationalism, patriotism and brand recognition in its sponsorship deals. Brewed by New Zealand multinational Lion Nathan, the beer has been mobilised for symbolic nationalistic appropriations through its sponsorship of New Zealand syndicates in the America's Cup global yacht racing since the 1980s. Perry (*Dominion*, "Boats, Boots") sees the congruence of marrying corporate interests with evocations of the nation, noting that such companies were "prepared to play the nationalistic card as an indicator of their good corporate citizenship" ("Close Encounters" 168). For Steinlager, this foray into high-tech global sport and 'technologised masculinity' (John and Jackson) had been relatively successful. Commencing its sponsorship of the All

Blacks in 1986, Steinlager played on forms of tradition and nation building/branding, as well as eroticised forms of masculinity, to promote the All Blacks to a broader national (and female) audience and as an attempt to repair the game's tarnished image (Perry *Dominion*). While Steinlager continues to propagate a vision of corporate nationalism (developed shortly), its locus is predominantly an allegiance between national audiences and national heritage (Scherer and Jackson *Globalization*). However, in the context of emerging global forms of sponsorship, Perry suggests that Steinlager "literally began to look like small beer" ("Close Encounters" 168).

Comparatively, the 'brand partnership' with Adidas would transmogrify pre-existing forms of sponsorship for the All Blacks, specifically in terms of the flow and exchange of global capital and its subsequent promotional cultures. Indeed, Adidas' involvement has been lucrative and unprecedented for the national team, with escalating deals ranging from \$100 million for five years in 1997, \$200 million for nine years in 2002 (Scherer and Jackson, *Globalization*), and a current deal worth an undisclosed sum through to 2019. While financially investing in New Zealand rugby at all levels (grassroots to elite), symbolically Adidas is also able to tap into nationalism, branded opportunities and, more broadly, commercialise rugby as part of a larger global promotional culture.

#### *Adidas and Corporate Nationalism*

This intertwining of transnational strategies with nationalistic representations has been conceptualised as corporate nationalism, whereby, "global capital seeks to – quite literally – capitalize upon the nation as source of collective identification and differentiation" (Silk, Andrews and Cole 19). Moreover, according to Silk, Andrews and Cole, "the nation is thus corporatized, and reduced to a branded expression of global capitalism's commandeering of collective identity and memory" (19). Having already acknowledged Steinlager's nationalistic sponsorship role, Adidas' strategy of corporate nationalism is overt; consistently attempting to emotively connect with New Zealand. As such, Adidas' promotional cultures have evoked an array of All Blacks traditions and legacies, as well as cultural ties with the nation, Maori and masculinity respectively (Jackson and Hokowhitu, Jackson, Grainger and Batty, Scherer and Jackson *Globalization*, "Sport Advertising"). Nevertheless, as has been intimated, Adidas' commercialised mythologies and nationalistic imagery have not always been well received, nor their culturally-insensitive, commercialised-appropriations of the haka, Maori customs and traditions (Jackson and Hokowhitu). The history of these two key All Black sponsors serves as a useful backdrop for their 2011 RWC advertising campaigns.

#### **Adidas: Corporate Nationalism and (Marginalising) the Local**

Perhaps mindful of a history of grandiose, culturally-verbose and myth-laden promotional imagery, as well as the specific limitations imposed by the IRB on representations surrounding the RWC for non-'official' tournament sponsors, Adidas' All Blacks/World Cup advertisement was notably understated. Entitled, *All In*, the advertisement evoked and emphasised the affective attachment between rugby, spectatorship and nationalism. However, in a self-referential context, it remained surprisingly subdued. Relying on highly stylised rugby representations, the advertisement juxtapositioned images of a Springboks test in Wellington with a series of location shots and rugby's self-reflexive transformation as a televised spectacle. Most prominent were the fans (combining anticipation, reactions and exhilaration at social gatherings and the event) and the defining action shots from a 'live' game, accentuated through slow motion, close-ups and multiple camera perspectives. In this



regard, Adidas' overt mythical constructions and product placement were jettisoned for the 'raw and direct' emotive impact of the affective social and nationalistic bonds of All Blacks' spectatorship. The connotation was an All Black victory and nationalistic exhilaration transposed onto the RWC stage, associating Adidas with the national team and the passionate New Zealand fan. Nevertheless, despite its conservative advertisement and attempt to emotively align with the 'local' in a non-controversial manner, Adidas' global corporate practices would provide a deeper rupture with the nation leading into the RWC.

As has already been noted, despite Adidas' substantial financial support, its accompanying promotional strategies have not been altogether unproblematic, particularly the persistent perception that Adidas was co-opting the All Blacks as merely another branded commodity in its collection of global sports gear. Such concerns intensified prior to the RWC when Adidas charged an inflated retail price for the All Black jersey of approximately \$220 (NZ). This roughly doubled its previous price in New Zealand stores, retailing for higher than on offer overseas and, in the process, seemingly put the jersey out of the reach of many New Zealanders (Samuel). Adidas then enacted a series of public relations blunders that further put it off-side with the New Zealand public ("PR Expert"). First, the company did not permit retailers to set their own prices although, due to public anger and demand (Tuttle), many subsequently would at a later stage, often selling the jerseys at cost (and a loss). Second, Adidas instigated measures to prevent New Zealander's accessing global websites to buy the jersey cheaper online, including removing the country as a delivery option from some online retailers, such as the American website *worldrugbyshop.com*, where the jersey could be obtained for approximately \$95 (NZ). Finally, Adidas refused to budge on its local position/global strategy despite extensive media coverage, heated responses from the general public and retailers, and negative appraisals from politicians and public figures. In fact, such was the nationalistically-charged animosity, Adidas felt compelled to cancel its pre-RWC 'Black is Beautiful' supporters' party (Fox, Easton and McCammon).

What the All Black jersey price-fixing fiasco revealed was the gulf between a transnational conglomerate operating within global forms of capital, and the tenuous position a co-opted promotional culture of corporate nationalism can have within a resistant local market, such as an entrenched rugby supporting New Zealand public. Nevertheless, somewhat ironically, Adidas New Zealand would subsequently reveal that the RWC helped them return a profit for the first time since 2007 ("RWC Helps").

### **Heineken vs. Steinlager**

Global/local tensions were also manifest in the 'official' sponsorship of specific beer brands for, on the one hand, the New Zealand national team (Steinlager), and on other the hand, the tournament global sponsor (Heineken). Preceding and for the duration of the 2011 RWC, Heineken had purchased the rights to be the 'global' beer for the tournament, replete with exclusive pouring and advertising rights. What this translated into for Heineken were prominent advertising hoardings during global telecasts, blanket bans on any other beers being available at matches or (seemingly) associated in any way with the tournament and, of course, a global advertisement to promote their association with the 2011 RWC. Filmed in New Zealand, the advertisement, *"This is the Game"*, was intended to connect Heineken as the beer of choice for global rugby fans by linking the brand with diverse national rugby masculinities. As such, the advertisement did little to stray from its assumed international and masculine audience, blending rugby footage with a westernised, middle-aged and



Eurocentric vision of male kinship and bonding through displays of nationalistic allegiance and, not surprisingly, alcohol consumption.

In fact, conspicuous in this advertisement was the over-representation of white, middle-aged, post-colonial masculinities (e.g., the European home nations, South Africa, Australia, as well as the French), with a striking absence of female fans and scant to fleeting coverage of other competing nations or diverse ethnicities (Samoa and Tonga are represented via traditional dress or a haka respectively, while other African, European, American and Asian countries remain absent, most notably Argentina and Japan). Even New Zealand, while being located as the host nation, was under-represented in the rugby footage or forms of fandom. Heineken's advertisement connotes a unified, masculine passion for rugby, respect for nationalistic rivalries and forms of masculine bonding, with these practices subsequently buttressed through the concurrent consumption of Heineken and televised/live rugby. As such, nationalistic displays are embraced but also blurred as a divisive practice in favour of a brotherhood revolving around rugby and alcohol. However, the specific nationalities and masculinities are telling for a company that on the one hand is trying to promote its rugby sponsorship to a 'global' audience, but on the other hand, is aware that that imagined rugby and Heineken-consuming audience is likely white, male, westernised and/or post-colonial.

In contradistinction, Steinlager overtly sought to connect with and evoke its brand of 'New Zealandness' in the face of the global promotional cultures surrounding the tournament. Drawing heavily on nostalgic, nationalistic imagery, Lion Nathan connected its Steinlager brand with the host nation and with the previous RWC triumph of 1987 through its strategic reissuing of the 1980s Steinlager white can. Entitled "*White Can*", the advertisement thinly associated the Steinlager brand with All Black sponsorship but, most potently, addressed and corralled the enduring New Zealand supporter who has emotionally experienced abject All Black failures at preceding World Cups. Not surprisingly, the advertisement was purportedly heavily scrutinised by rivals Heineken for being on the cusp of violating the global rights and exclusivity Heineken had obtained for the tournament. Within the white can advertisement, the forlorn nationalistic figure is encapsulated by the central aging male, whose unopened white Steinlager can at the original RWC serves as a 'lucky charm' during each subsequent final/semi-final, and concludes with a "this time" message for the impending tournament. Moreover, the male (represented as a white, urban, middle class father – the postcolonial 'kiwi bloke'?) endures these constant defeats with his friends and family but remains defiant in his unwavering support for the All Blacks.

Clearly, the advertisement is reliant on forms of nationalistic nostalgia and cultural memory, connecting the branded beer, team and historical moment to hail the (male) New Zealand viewer. Turner suggests, "the memory-making capacity of the best advertising depends on a cultural pre-history or preconscious that is also an image-bank" (95), while noting that "the image is what we share. And that sharing structures a collective, or collective psyche: 'us'" (95). Steinlager's RWC advertising campaign nostalgically fused nationalism, brand recognition, masculinity and cultural memory through its visual evoking of a return to New Zealand's 1987 RWC victory. Solidifying and corraling its national audience were the apparently recognisable and shared (masculine) emotive experiences of corresponding RWC defeats to structure forms of collectivity and 'New Zealandness'. Nevertheless, despite jettisoning clichéd representations of the mythic rural and landscape this remained, essentially, a pakeha cultural memory with little sense of a bi-or multicultural New Zealand.

Symbolically and conceptually, the advertising campaign and branded product placement via also reissuing the white can (to commemorate Steinlager's 25 years of All Black sponsorship allegedly) gained salience through publicity, sales and its vernacular circulation in everyday life. As a point of difference, the white can was also a clever marketing ploy by Lion Nathan in a country that was awash with 'black out' campaigns and communal rituals as discussed earlier. The branded white can bucked these promotional and marketing trends; connecting Steinlager to the cultural memory of the only All Black RWC success and, simultaneously, a nostalgic return to New Zealand's previous host nation status for the event. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Steinlager also issued limited edition black bottles during the RWC, reflecting a dual promotional strategy of nostalgic and contemporary corporate nationalism.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Our article has traced some of the different means by which the 2011 (New Zealand) Rugby World Cup was mobilised as a form of nation-building to evoke and represent 'New Zealandness'. The prestige of being the host nation for an international tournament, the status of rugby as the 'national game' and the aura of the All Blacks clearly contributed to these evocations. Yet, as our article has demonstrated, within the alleged 'stadium of four million', a broader nationalistic identification, allegiance and collectivity also coalesced around and became prevalent through the mediated coverage, communal rituals, ancillary events and promotional cultures. The mediated coverage and ancillary events (re)invented and (re)produced mythologies of New Zealandness, idealised traditions and nostalgic representations of an imagined socio-cultural history often interlocked with rugby. The communal rituals reified such assumptions; hailing and interpellating nationalistic-subjects to actively brandish individuated and collective forms of national unity, and to see themselves as part of this nation and its 'kiwi' culture, through the various 'black out' campaigns and displays that were seemingly omnipresent nationwide. Finally, (trans)national companies commodified and branded many of the nation-building attributes above, strategically enacting corporate nationalism to align nationalistic representations and nostalgic allegiances with their (global) products and profits.

Post-event, New Zealand's staging of the 2011 Rugby World Cup has generally been perceived as a success. While it is an economic reality that such events run at a loss, their benefits are more symbolic than financial. Indeed, editorials emphasised the sense of civic and national pride generated by the RWC, concluding that it had bought pleasure, a welcome distraction from the recent tragedies (the Christchurch earthquakes, Pike River mines, and the Rena grounding in the Bay of Plenty), and gave a "healthy boost to the country's spirit" ("Editorial: RWC's Economic"; see also Binning, "Editorial: A Day", "Editorial: Both All Blacks", "Thanks, Guys"). Nevertheless, the figures themselves reflected well upon the nation. In May 2012, Rugby New Zealand 2011 (RNZ 2011) announced a loss of SNZ31.3 million for the 2011 Cup, some \$NZ8 million lower than earlier forecast. The May 2012 announcement also noted,

The news is a further boost for a tournament that delivered above forecasted visitor numbers (133,000), ticket sales (1.35 million), television coverage (207 territories) and financial injection for the development of rugby worldwide (GBO 90 million), while the action on the field produced the most competitive tournament to date. ("RWCL Welcomes")

In response to this news, IRB Chairman Bernard Lapasset declared, “[This] announcement further endorses the strong collaboration between Rugby World Cup Ltd, NZRU, RNZ 2011 and the New Zealand Government in delivering a world class tournament that showcased New Zealand on a global stage”. (“RWCL Welcomes”)

Political rhetoric aside, the 2011 RWC experience exposes positive and negative dimensions to contemporary processes of nation-building. In a critical sense, lavish spending on an immediate loss-incurring event clearly confounds the present economic recession. Specifically, the National coalition government in New Zealand are imposing budget and funding cut-backs in both the social and cultural arena (the refusal to fund the public service channel TVNZ7 beyond its five year expiration in June 2012) yet, conversely, continue to pour funding into international sporting events, such as the 2011 RWC and the New Zealand Olympic team. Alternatively, these highly visible (if not expensive) global spectacles furnish further forms of nation-building through the evoking of nationalistic pride, success and international recognition. For example, the ‘nation’ switched onto the finals and an All Black triumph as, allegedly, “the RWC Final was the most watched event in New Zealand TV history, attracting an incredible 98 per cent audience share” (“Record Broadcast”) while, of New Zealand’s top 50 television programmes for 2011, the top 16 by total audience were RWC matches (Dickison and Jones). Therefore, even though it may have been a banal political slogan and marketing catchphrase, ‘the stadium of four million’ arguably did materialise nationally to some degree. Bell surmises in relation to the America’s Cup, “through such an event the sense of communal links between individuals is heightened, and our collective identification with ‘the nation’ reiterated...in this mass celebration, we are essentially celebrating ourselves” (15). It can be asserted that the sense of an event, of a collective ‘us’, and traces of a nationalistic allegiance and pride emerged within and through the evocations of ‘New Zealandness’ that were mobilised for nation-building during the 2011 Rugby World Cup.

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